

William Bailey – Scindian Convict #75

William Bailey was an 18-year-old labourer working as a steam engine attendant or stoker when he got caught up in the Chartist riots in Camberwell, London in early March 1848. A working men's movement with a manifesto called The People's Charter seeking fair wages and universal suffrage for men over 21 years; while intended to have peaceful marches to demonstrate its cause, when the march to present a petition to parliament was called off, one response was widespread damage purposefully carried out on the stores of small shop keepers. The previous week, on 6-8 March, 127 men, of ages between 12 and 59, had been arrested. Bailey was among 400-500 men intent on rioting on 13 March and he was involved in the raid on the primary premises targeted, that of Thomas Grey, pawnbroker and silversmith. As the men broke into the shop they were heard to cry out "Hurrah for liberty!" Grey estimated his losses at around £900, including 200 watches and 170 rings which the men took and threw to the crowds outside the shop. At trial his loss was more conservatively estimated at around £650. Bailey was seen and arrested among 9 arrests made on the day which swelled to 25 arrests after witness statements were taken into account.

On trial at the Old Bailey in London on 3 April 1848, William Bailey was one of fifteen to stand indicted on two charges, housebreaking and larceny. Found guilty on both counts and each carrying a 7-year penalty, his 14-year term of sentence became one of transportation rather than just imprisonment. London's *Morning Chronicle* of the following week described the participants of the cause:

"We believe that the Chartist leaders are sincere in the desire which they profess to maintain peace and order. They have men of some mind among them, who know how much may be done by discussion, and how little can be done by violence. But the misfortune is that a mob generally leads its leaders. The winds, once set loose, will not return to their caverns at the bidding of those who sent them forth. There are, unfortunately, many persons out of employ in the metropolis, and of course there are not a few rogues who welcome all confusion as an opportunity for plunder."

After receiving his sentence Bailey continued to be held in the Newgate prison, adjoining the Old Bailey courts, until taken to Millbank Prison on 10 May 1848 where he remained for 7 months. All prisoners sentenced to transportation were initially sent to Millbank Prison on the banks of the Thames River in London for an assessment period. On 19 December 1848, Bailey was transferred to the north of the country to Wakefield House of Corrections in West Yorkshire. Nine months later he was moved south again to Portland Prison, on 9 August 1849, in readiness for transportation to Western Australia aboard the *Scindian*, the first convict transport to the new penal colony, which departed 28 February and arrived 1 June 1850.

Bailey was one of the four youngest men to be transported in the first convict shipment to Western Australia, aged around 20 years on arrival. The Convict Establishment recorded his physical appearance in their documentation: height 5' 5 1/2", with light-coloured hair, blue eyes, a full face, fair complexion and of middling stout appearance. He had a cut on the back of his left hand.

On 16 May 1851 Bailey was issued with his ticket-of-leave and was initially assigned to work in the Perth District. It is recorded that on 27 May 1851 Bailey passed through Fremantle on his way to Champion Bay to take up his employment with the Geraldine Mining Company as a labourer. However, the Midwest WA Heritage convict record for Bailey states that on 20 May 1851 he changed from his employer Ewen McIntosh to seek work in the Perth district as no provision was made for him to reach his new master. After this time, it is known that he was working from the Convict Depot at Port Gregory as this correspondence regarding his conditional pardon verifies:

22 May 1854

Reg No 75 William Bailey

Your Cond. Pardon will be due on the payment of 1 wh. is still wanting to complete the full payment of your passage as per enclosed a/c.

E. Y. M. Henderson

Geraldine Co. P. Gregory

Bailey clearly paid off the rest of his account fairly promptly as his conditional pardon was issued on 29 July 1854.

A William Bailey married a female emigrant named Catherine Cunningham in Middle Swan on 3 November 1857. Catherine Cunningham arrived aboard the *Palestine* on 28 April 1853 and is listed as being 20 years of age at that time. No free men listed in the Biographical Dictionary of Western Australians fit the correct age profile to have married Catherine in 1857. Three convicts named William Bailey arrived in the first year of arrival of the convicts. #75 per Scindian, #297 per Mermaid and #584 per Pyrenees I. Convicts #75 and #584 were both born about 1829 and #297 was born around 1823. #584 is recorded as having gone to South Australia in May 1866. Catherine and William Bailey had at least seven children, all bar one recorded as being born in the south-west of Western Australia between 1858 and 1874. As yet, no records have been found to verify whether this was convict #75 William Bailey.

An expirée named William Bailey died on 15 June 1903 at the Mount Eliza Old Men's Home aged 74 years. This correlates with the age for convict #75 William Bailey. He was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery, Anglican denomination, DC section, gravesite 0143.

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Sources:

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State Records Office of Western Australia, Convict Registers: Cons 1156 C11, p 91, letter 295; Cons 1156 R17, R21A, R21B, V12, 214; Acc 488/30, letters 405 and 418; Cons 1386, Vol. 1, p 20;

The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London's Central Criminal Court 1674-1913:

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Wakefield Prison register, HO24_13, 14880, courtesy of Bevan Carter.